

Perception of Prospective Teachers towards Four-Year Integrated Teacher Education Programme

Abstract

Despite having the importance of 21st century skills (OECD, 2018), therefore, global perspective-oriented training of prospective teachers has been a decisive issue not only in India but overseas also. Ergo, the paradigm of teacher training in India has recently been shifted to integrated model (blending between content, pedagogy and technology) of teacher education followed by different models like horizontal integration (B.A. B.Ed. & B.Sc. B.Ed.) and vertical integration (M.A. B.Ed. & M.Sc. B.Ed.) for preparing committed, responsible and professional teachers to fulfil the needs and aspirations of the society and nation (NCTE, 2014). But nowadays it has become a debatable issue for ascertaining the effectiveness of the integrated model of teacher education programme to produce the best professionals. Therefore, this study has been focused to assess the perception of prospective teachers towards the Four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme (ITEP). In the study, 93 prospective teachers of final year of four-year ITEP (B.A. B.Ed. - 48 & B.Sc. B.Ed. - 45) were selected through purposive sampling technique. The investigator used self-made tool for data collection. Qualitative analysis was used to analyse the data. The results reveal that prospective teachers' perceptions towards ITEP are favourable to prepare professionals in the teaching profession by adopting the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPCK) framework; helpful to qualify the necessary exams like CTET and STET. But some critical points are needed to rethink the reforms in the structure of ITEP, like bridging the gap between undergraduate and postgraduate level teacher education programmes, to reduce the credits load, coordination between liberal and education departments and true integration between theory, practice and technology. The findings of the study are expected to encourage the scholarly attention and critical reflections on the effects of different models on the professional competencies of prospective teachers. Possible educational implications and policy outcomes are outlined.

Keywords: Prospective Teacher, Perception, Four Year Integrated Teacher Education Programme,

“A teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame.”

- Rabindranath Tagore

Introduction

Teachers are considered to be the nation builder and backbone of any country (Kalam, 2006); they are the social engineers who transform the society by socializing and humanising our young minds (Sudalaimuthu, 2013). Furthermore, the responsibility of a teacher in shaping the future of the nation is clearly mentioned by The Education Commission (1964–66) by stating that “The Destiny of India is now being shaped

in her classrooms.” The National Policy on Education NPE (1986) underlines this greater role as elucidated here: “The status of the teacher reflects the socio-cultural ethos of the society. It is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers.” However, various commissions and committees have been set up for providing direction for the improvement of teacher education across the country. But NCFTE (2009) highlighted that the present teacher education scenario has seen an extraordinary expansion of teacher

education institutions and programmes to meet the increasing demand for teachers. As a result, there has been a large increase in the number of B.Ed. colleges and a virtual mushrooming of teacher education institutions (Bharati, 2019). Ergo, to train individuals to become an effective teacher is a critical issue from so many years. The changes in economic, political, social and technological spheres have deeply influenced the nature, structure and functions of teacher education throughout the world. In the light of the report *Learning without Burden (1993)*, the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE-2005) highlighted the five guiding principles: (i) connecting knowledge to life outside the school; (ii) ensuring that learning shifts away from rote methods; (iii) enriching the curriculum so that it goes beyond textbooks; (iv) making examinations more flexible and integrating them with classroom life; and (v) nurturing an overriding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country (NCF, 2005). For ensuring quality teacher education, the curriculum framework of teacher education was developed by NCTE (2009) which highlighted the dimension of the curriculum practices for prospective teachers to develop professionalism at different stages of the school system and increased the duration of each programme (Sahoo & Sharma, 2018). The Justice Verma Commission (2012) report has also given specific recommendations in the form of restructuring of pre-service and in-service teacher education throughout the country. Before the half century, a paradigm shift was brought about in teacher education in the form of a four-year teacher education programme. The National Commission on Teachers (1983-85) recommended five-year integrated courses with internships. However, it was firstly started in Regional Colleges of Education of NCERT, thereafter, Kurukshetra University, Rural institute in Vidya Nagar. However, in the first phase it was designed for science, mathematics and technology.

In addition, recently NCTE has recommended two models of teacher education programmes—the Integrated Teacher Education Programme after 10+2 (content-cum-methodology) and the Non-Integrated Teacher Education Programme after 10+2+3 (content free). Thereafter, NCTE proposed a four-year ITEP for Class XII students with 50 per cent marks as realised to be necessary for preparing committed, responsible and professional teachers. The curriculum of the integrated programme is designed to inculcate the world's best practices in the field of teacher education. Students in Integrated Programme learn courses with the integration of theory, practice and technology. It also visualises the vertical mobility of teachers. After completing the Integrated Programme, the students are free to take up a master's degree Programme (Content) or master's degree Programme in Education (M.Ed.), or can choose the teaching profession. In this programme, a student can complete graduation in content and methodology both in four year whereas in the Non-Integrated Programme (two-year B.Ed.), a student spends 5 years to reach the same level. This programme emphasises more on the most desirable blending of content, pedagogy and technology. This combination is called the Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework. It provides the opportunity to shape young minds and motivate them to choose the teaching profession as a career. Although teacher education programme has considerable benefits, but it faces some challenges too:

- (i) After completing the programme, it is unclear where students will go either PG programme in parent discipline or education discipline, therefore, integration will break down.
- (ii) Which model is more effective for teachers' preparation—the integrated or non-integrated programme?
- (iii) Ensuring the sharing of existing physical resources of the other departments of the University/ Colleges /Composite teacher education institutions

- (iv) ITEP is not merely a combination of two courses but the complete interweaving of courses with respect to content, pedagogy and technology. For the effective use of TPACK framework and requires the same coordination in the teaching faculty for the core disciplines and the teacher education department.

Review of Related Researches

The evidence of research studies conducted in India regarding the reforms of structure of teacher education is available in ample account. Prospective teachers are the pivotal point of the different models of teacher education programme, therefore, the prospective teachers' perception towards ITEP is considered as a significant aspect in this respect. However, some studies have already been conducted in India in the field of teacher education. Bhattacharjee (2002) reported that students in the one-year B.Ed. programme were found to be better in their attitude towards teaching and scientific aptitude than students in the four-year B.Ed. programme. In contrast, Moruskar (2004) found that students enrolled in the four-year integrated B.A. B.Ed. are better than one-year B.Ed. students with respect to teaching competency and teaching effectiveness. Tamang (2018) conducted a study on the attitude of teacher educators towards implementation of two years teacher education and reported that two-year B.Ed. course is better than one-year B.Ed. course in case of quality education and quality of teacher preparation. Sushma (2016) found no significant difference in the attitude of government, aided and unaided teacher educators' attitude towards the two-year B.Ed. programme. Nataraja (2016) reported that that two-year B.Ed. programme was not favourable. However, they realised its importance for enhancing the prospective teachers' competencies with a two-year programme. Adhikary (2017) found a mixed perception towards the two-year B.Ed. programme in Assam and reported dissatisfaction towards

the curriculum distribution of the two-year B.Ed. programme. The results of the present study revealed that the majority of teachers working in the elementary school as well as the prospective ones had less or unfavourable attitude towards the teaching profession. They recommended the induction of those teachers who had a positive and more favourable attitude towards teaching profession (Farrukh & Shakoor, 2018). In contrast, Sahoo & Sharma (2018) reported that the curriculum reform in teacher education was appreciated by student teachers. The structure reform in teacher education introduced by NCTE need not be associated with the needs and aspirations of the society and the nation alone but also with student teachers, teachers and teacher educators.

After an analysis of the reviews, however, it was found that a number of studies are conducted to study the perception and attitudes of prospective teachers and teachers towards two years B.Ed. Programme and four-year ITEP as offered by RIEs of NCERT. But there seems to be a dearth of studies on the perception of prospective teachers towards the four-year ITEP as offered by other institutions than RIEs. Ergo, to fill this gap, the present study has been conducted to study the perception of prospective teachers towards a four-year Integrated Programme in Teacher Education.

Objective of the study

The objective of present study is as follows: To study the perception of prospective teachers towards the four-year Integrated Teacher Education Programme

Methods and Procedures of the Study

A descriptive survey method was used to conduct the study primarily sought to describe and understand the perception of prospective teachers towards the four-year ITEP.

For the present study, the population selected all the prospective teachers in the last semester of the four-year integrated B.A. B.Ed. and B.Sc. B.Ed. programmes from Central University of South Bihar (CUSB), Gaya. This study comprised 93 students of B.A. B.Ed. (48) and B.Sc. B.Ed. (45), who were selected purposively. Only the prospective teachers of CUSB, Gaya are included in the present study. The

investigator used a self-made tool consisting of two parts for data collection of the study. In the first part, a three-point Likert scale having the responses—Agree (A), Neutral (N), and Disagree (D) was used, and in the second part, open-ended questions were used. It was validated by the experts' views of teachers, teacher educators and psychologists. Thereafter, data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Analysis Of Data

The analysis and interpretation of the study have been presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Part-I				
S. No.	Statement	Response (%)		
		Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1.	The vision of ITEP is relevant for improving the quality of teacher education in India.	79.70	8.10	12.16
2.	ITEP helps to prepare the competent professionals for the demands of the teaching profession.	78.08	13.69	8.21
3.	ITEP is the true blending among content, pedagogy and technology.	54.66	26.66	18.66
4.	Institutions provide the following adequate resources for the proper teacher training:			
	i. Academic Calendar	81.17	9.21	9.21
	ii. Timetable	81.08	8.10	10.81
	iii. Exam calendar	78.37	10.81	10.81
	iv. Lab facilities	62.16	13.15	24.32
	v. Smart Board Room	71.40	11.68	16.88
	vi. ICT lab	59.72	8.33	31.94
	vii. Lab (Language, Math, Science and Social Science).	54.05	18.91	27.02
	viii. Facility of library	64.00	10.66	25.33
	ix. Specialised faculty members	62.16	10.81	27.02
5.	ITEP curriculum is burdensome to some extent for prospective teachers.	62.66	17.33	20.00
6.	ITEP emphasises the following components in T-L process:			
	i. Allotment of course instructors according to their specialisations	58.10	16.21	25.67
	ii. Learner centered activities	45.94	16.21	37.83
	iii. Use of effective methods in teaching (problem-solving, project, inductive-deductive, etc.)	57.89	15.78	26.31
	iv. Continuous and comprehensive assessment	80.62	6.84	12.32

	v. Proper Weightage to practice teaching (SIP)	71.23	13.69	15.06
	vi. Proper feedback system	60.81	12.16	97.02
	vii. Conduction of workshops/seminar	48.52	19.11	32.35
	viii. Information and guidance for competitive Exams	37.66	10.38	51.94
	ix. Proper orientation & opportunities for placement	43.05	5.50	51.38
	x. Facility of Guidance and Counselling	50.00	10.81	39.18
7.	ITEP provides adequate time for:			
	i. Completing the course of liberal discipline	44.44	19.44	36.11
	ii. Completing the course of education discipline	61.64	13.69	24.65
	iii. Micro-teaching	65.75	16.43	17.80
	iv. Completing the school internship	71.62	10.81	17.56
	v. Co-curricular activities	46.57	20.54	32.87
	vi. Library	50.00	16.21	33.78
	vii. Computer laboratory	43.83	19.17	36.98
	viii. Self study	43.05	20.83	36.11
	ix. Discussion (teachers/students etc.)	50.70	22.53	26.76
	x. Completing the curriculum	57.53	21.91	20.50
	xi. Completing the assessment procedure	52.77	19.44	27.77
	xii. For remedial teaching	42.85	14.28	42.85
	xiii. Preparation for the higher education	43.05	6.94	50.00
8.	ITEP provides the opportunity for collaboration, coordination of different departments for preparing the competent teachers.	53.33	22.66	24.00
9.	In the institution, all concerned departments/schools are well coordinated to achieve the goal of ITEP.	44.44	16.67	38.89
10.	ITEP is helpful to achieve the targets after/during the programme like (regarding qualified the exams like CTET, STET and other related exams from the teaching profession)	70.83	15.27	13.88
11..	ITEP provides the better opportunities for better employment in teaching profession	56.94	20.83	22.22
12.	ITEP fulfils your requirements considering the required characteristics of true professional in the teaching profession	54.05	22.97	22.97
13.	Two-year B. Ed. is better than ITEP because it provides proper time and it is less burdensome.	28.37	17.56	54.05

Part-II

1. What do you mean by Integrated Programme in Teacher Education or Integrated Teacher Education Programme?
2. ITEP truly integrates the contents of the liberal discipline (science/social science course) and education discipline. If not, why?
3. ITEP is the true blending between content, pedagogy and technology.
If not, why?
4. Which one model of the Integrated Programme in Teacher Education do you prefer for preparing teachers?
 - i. Horizontal Integration in the Teacher Education Programme (B.A. B.Ed./B.Sc. B.Ed.)
 - ii. Vertical integration in the Teacher Education Programme (M.A. B.Ed./M.Sc. B.Ed.)
 If yes, why?
5. Mention, which part of your programme (B.A. B.Ed./B.Sc. B.Ed.) do you like the most?
6. After completing your programme, which one of the following programmes will you prefer?
 - i. PG programme (M.A./M.Sc.)
 - ii. PG programme (M.Ed.)
 - iii. M.A. M.Ed./M.Sc. M.Ed. Programme (New Model for continuing the integration between B.Ed. and M.Ed.)
7. What major problems you've faced during the completion of this programme?
8. As a part of this Programme, what suggestions you want to provide for the improvement of this programme.

Major Findings

After analysing data, the following major findings were reached:

1. 90 per cent of the prospective teachers prefer ITEP rather than two-year programmes because this provides opportunities for saving the year with dual degree and also provides a backup for their career at an early stage.
2. However, most of the prospective teachers are satisfied with the effort to establish a blending between content and pedagogy but not technology. It may either be due to the non-availability of proper resources or absence of trained teachers for the course—ICT in Education.
3. 50 per cent of the prospective teachers realised that true integration is not present between the parent departments and teacher education department. That is why content and pedagogy are being taught simultaneously but true integration is missing.
4. However, 75 per cent of the students want to do a post graduate programme in their parent discipline. Only 16 per cent students have shown their willingness to choose an innovative programme such as MA M.Ed./M.Sc. M.Ed., if they get the opportunity. But unfortunately, only 4 per cent students are willing to take admission in the M.Ed. programme after the completion of ITEP. Besides that, no student from the science stream showed his/her interest to take admission in the M.Ed. programme.
5. Most of the prospective teachers are dissatisfied with the course structure especially due to burdensome courses of education components.
6. 90 per cent of the prospective teachers experienced that this programme does not provide the time for discussion, self-study with reference books and especially for preparation of higher education. Therefore they want to reduce the credits of the education component and shift SIP from the last semester to the sixth and seventh semesters. Hence, in semester VIII, they will get time for the preparation of competitive exams for higher education and jobs too.

7. Most of the prospective teachers realised that equal focus is not given to the liberal discipline and education component. The contents of B.A. and B.Sc. are not properly dealt with when compared to B.A. and B.Sc. Honours. That is why they face difficulties to get admission in P.G. programmes in renowned higher educational institutions.
8. 90 per cent prospective teachers supported horizontal integration in the field of teacher education rather than vertical integration.

Conclusion

The study revealed that there was a favourable perception of prospective teachers towards the ITEP with respect to producing competent teachers as demanded in the teaching profession, best blending between content and pedagogy, effective teaching-learning process, helpful in qualifying various teacher eligibility tests like CTET, TET and other related exams in the teaching profession. But some points are very critical to think again like introducing an innovative model, reducing credits especially from the education component by removing the repetition of course content, full time school internship in reputed schools and scheduled in the sixth and seventh semesters, coordination between the liberal and education disciplines, and an equal focus on both disciplines. On the basis of the above findings, some suggestions are made to create a positive perception among the prospective teachers so that the desired goal of the teacher preparation model as prescribed by NCTE can be achieved.

1. The first and foremost vision of ITEP is to attract young aspiring minds in the teaching profession for a better education system across the country but unfortunately, students still consider this programme as a back-up option for their career and as a means to save an year in their degree. Therefore, again this objective seems to not be catered. Hence, we have to think in this direction.
2. As per the findings, only 4 per cent students are willing to pursue the PG programme in Education (M.Ed.) whereas no student of science stream is willing to do this. Therefore, for continuing the integration, NCTE should rethink an innovative model, that is, M.A. M.Ed./M. Sc. M.Ed. after B.A. B.Ed. and B.Sc. B.Ed. for preparing better teacher educators.
3. Due to frequent and drastic changes in the structure of the teacher education programme, especially the duration of the programme, different models and eligibility of teacher educators, it creates confusion and discourages students to opt the teacher education programme at the postgraduate level. Hence, NCTE should rethink in this direction too.
4. Provision of school internship in the last semesters of the programme without any theoretical burden.
5. As per the findings, 90 per cent of the prospective teachers felt that this programme was very burdensome and not giving equal weightage to the liberal disciplines. Therefore, credits should be reduced especially from the education discipline by removing repetitive contents and making it more practical rather than theoretical.
6. Students also observed that there is a lack of collaboration between liberal and education departments as it should be in composite institutions (NCTE, 2014). So, the regulatory bodies and authorities should think about this too.

After analysing the findings and reviews of related researches, the prospective teachers gave a highly positive opinion regarding the use of student-centric methods, assessment, orientation and practices of school internship. In addition, they liked the provision for the assessment of institutions by NAAC and other assessment agencies through a transparent procedure. Ninety per cent prospective teachers preferred integrated teacher education programmes rather than the two-year programme because they wanted to

save one year for getting the dual degree. As a whole, the teacher education students have expressed a positive opinion about the structural reforms in teacher education introduced as per NCTE regulation in 2014. But some critical points were outlined such as the absence of true coordination between the liberal and education departments, not giving equal weightage to the liberal disciplines, lack of appropriate use of ICT in T-L process, a burdensome programme that limits the time for self-learning, discussion and use of libraries too. Such perceptions of prospective teachers have significant implications in strengthening teacher education programmes in the teacher

education institutions across the country. However, it is not clear yet why the policy has been restricted only to run ITEP than sequential teacher education programme (Bharti, 2019). But the discussion about the existence of one-year training programme after PG and two year after UG programme ,etc., are being done in the draft of the New Education Policy (2019, p.--). Finally, there is a great need to conduct qualitative researches for assessing effectiveness of the integrated and non-integrated model of teacher education programme in reference to professional competencies (including TPACK framework) and attitudes towards the teaching profession of prospective teachers.

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